


**REVIEW OF *MIGRATION, MODERNITY AND
TRANSNATIONALISM IN THE WORK OF JOSEPH CONRAD.*
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The volume consists of three parts, as well as an introduction, afterword, index of names and index of subjects. As noted in the introduction, transnationalism has often been regarded “as a product of today’s increasingly globalized world, and the consequence of closer interactions brought about by the breaking of geographical, economic and cultural barriers” (1). There are many borders and crossings that Conrad experienced in his own life, not only as an immigrant to England, but also in the perception of his own work. Hence, transnationalism and migration are two crucial notions “able to magnify the literary stature and fictional production” of Joseph Conrad (5) and his characters are often marked by crossings – changes of nation, changes of culture and changes of identity.

The eleven papers of this collection which present the contributors’ own interpretations of migration and transnationalism and how the characters within Conrad’s novels are positioned as “migrants,” “immigrants” or *émigrés* are grouped in three sections: “Crossing Borders,” “Empire, Movement and Migration” and “Modernity and Transnational.” The terms “migrants” and “immigrants” express impermanent and permanent nature of movements of people and cultures within this historical movement where the noun “migrant” implies a person in continuous movement, “immigrant” designates an identity imposed on the outsider by the native, and *émigré* suggests the self-perception of a transnational individual, with “trans” meaning to go across, to go beyond and even to overcome (2). These qualities are visible in Conrad’s characters as they move between geographical, cultural, moral and social boundaries; as well as the boundaries between the real and the imagined and that of life and death.

The first part of the volume, which contains 4 essays on various aspects of crossing borders and the rites of entry to a new nationality, opens with Robert Hampson’s text “Conrad’s Rites of Entry and Reunion.” The author concentrates on Conrad’s entry into British nationality, and the various rites it involved which is described in his works, starting from his first entry into London in 1878 in “Poland Revisited,” which aroused feelings of loneliness (17). Hampson deals with the early stages in

Conrad's process of neutralization, i.e., the series of successful Board of Trade examinations he took, that were stages in his progress towards naturalization as a rite of passage in presented anecdotal form in *A Personal Record* and in fictional form in *Chance*. The rites of passage in *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus,' Heart of Darkness, The Secret Agent* and "Amy Foster" – Hampson claims – present a less positive picture, i.e., a disrupted or incomplete rite of passage and incorporation into society. The migrant's re-entry into his native society and culture are analysed in "Poland Revisited" and *The Rover*. Both Conrad and his protagonist Peyrol are strangers in the places where they were born. Return home after long absence and confrontation with memories was very complex. This article demonstrates, that although Conrad became a British subject, he never ceased to be "a citizen of the world" (18).

The first essay provides a helpful frame for William Atkinson's positioning "rites of entry" and "rites of passage" in Conrad's life and his works: *A Personal Record, Heart of Darkness, Nostromo* and *The Shadow-Line*. Arguing that "a rite of passage that enables right of entry is, in effect, also a rite of entry" (38), Atkinson identifies three rites of passage in *A Personal Record*, i.e., the three examinations – for second mate, first mate and master – which effect Conrad's incorporation into the officer group. He explains that Conrad, who was born on the borderland between nations, was exiled from birth to an experience of transnationalism. He found himself in an indeterminate position and his rite of passage was incomplete, it was no more than a rite of entry: "Like a Pole without a state," he was "a sailor without sails" (39).

Agnieszka Adamowicz-Pośpiech in her essay "From Berdyczów to Bishopsburne: Conrad's Real and Imaginary Journeys," explores the reasons why Conrad processed his life as a journey and challenged it according to the modern categories of "exile, migration and uprootedness" (51). She analyses Conrad's reminiscences in *A Personal Record* through "the optics of geopoetics" and argues that in Conrad's "nomadic vision constant movement, dislocation and instability" constituted "*conditio humana*" (51). *A Personal Record*, which can be viewed as a record of his real and imaginary journeys, constitutes "an auto-bio-atlas showing his geographical, emotional and intellectual routes" (65).

Crossing borders and cultural transitions are also explored in "The vision of a Cosmopolitan': The Transnational Aesthetic of *A Personal Record*" by Riccardo Capoferro. In this essay *A Personal Record*, which is tightly interconnected to the entire corpus of Conrad's fiction, is viewed as a fictionalized vocational story. Capoferro underlines that Conrad's naturalization was the outcome of a path to professionalism that demanded hard work and dedication to the "practical-secular-values" of the British marine (74). Conrad's self-representation stresses the public role of the artist, and entails the idea of his audience as, potentially, a transnational community. The ability of the novel to establish sympathetic links independently of social boundaries assumes a global reach.

Section two of the volume opens with Richard Niland's essay "New Shades of Expression': Death and Empire in Conrad's *Unrestful Tales*," which traces a process of transition in *Tales of Unrest* – a volume founded upon and reflective of the "unrest" in Conrad's own experiences and visions (93). As underlined by Niland, these tales

helped Conrad to reveal and expand thematic and geographical range that allowed him to dramatize liminal spaces and explore the boundaries that shaped his own process of redefinition and realignment, not least the protocols and codes of Empire. Conrad's first collection of short stories confirms his transition from professional sailor to professional writer. It explores the tensions of life Conrad lived in the shadow of empire and death from Brittany to Borneo, with unrest the animating force behind the people and politics of Conrad's transnational fiction.

Kim Salmons in "'Queer Foreign Fish': Food and Migration in *Almayer's Folly* and *The Secret Agent*" claims that Conrad's migratory experiences – first a child of political exiles in Ukraine, then as a sailor in the Merchant Navy, and finally as a writer of English fiction – can be charted by the smells, food and manners of eating that he became familiar with during his travels, and he can be seen as the living embodiment of transnationalism as seen through his food preferences. In her analysis of *Almayer's Folly*, Salmons demonstrates that for Conrad food represented a barrier to belonging and acceptance, whereas in *The Secret Agent* it epitomizes a cross-cultural rite of entry to a new community. An exploration of migrant food in *Almayer's Folly* and *The Secret Agent* crosses the boundaries of cultural difference through "trade and portable foodways" (122).

Conradian strategies of dialogue and language which express his "transnational artistic project" (138) are analyzed by Tania Zulli in her essay "'The East Spoke to Me, but It Was a Western Voice': Perlocutionary Acts and the Language of Migration in Conrad's Fiction." Zulli stresses that the idea of spoken language as a channel to configure social relationships in different cultural contexts is presented from the very beginning of Conrad's writing career, and the condition as outcasts of some of his expatriate characters is disclosed through their speech. Conrad's Almayer and his wife in *Almayer's Folly*, and Yanko Goorall in "Amy Foster" speak to contemporary readers about migration, exclusion and integration into a new society. *Almayer's Folly* (1895) and "Amy Foster" (1901) mark the beginning and the end of a period in which Conrad worked on the reassessment of his artistic personality and the artistic nature of his works by shifting between two identities, that of a Polish citizen and that of an English writer.

The troubled issues of belonging and residence which underpin Conrad's portrayal of the changing social relations brought about by migration and informing our understanding of transnationalism, are discussed in Andrew Francis's essay "A 'Settled Resident': Movements of Peoples and Cultures in Conrad's Malay Fiction." Francis examines the implications and cultural impacts of colonial migration, Arab, Chinese and Malay migration. The author of the text also considers the "transnationalism of things" (143), material objects that accompanied the migrants or that were bought or built by them – things that are the voiceless, but not expressionless indicators of change and movement that contribute to Conrad's construction of character and context.

Katherine Isobel Baxter's essay "Arab and Muslim Transnationalism in Conrad's Malay Fiction," which opens the last section, also deals with the mobility between East Asia and the Middle East in Conrad's fiction. The relationship between the in-

creasingly commercial business of international travel and the transnational circulation of religious ideas is reflected in Conrad's various Arab traders and his Muslim Malays who have undertaken or are undertaking Hajj. These movements, which located danger in the long-established migratory, familial and religious networks, troubled European colonial powers, mainly the British and Dutch in the Malay Peninsula and the Levant and North Africa during the decline of the Ottoman Empire.

The fiction of immigration to the new world is explored by Yael Levin in "'Amy Foster' (1901), *Amerika* (1927) and *After Bread* (1880): Modernism, Technology and the Immigrant." This comparative analysis of Conrad's short story with Henryk Sienkiewicz's novel *After Bread* and Kafka's unfinished novel *Amerika* illustrates the impact of modernity on the migrant experience. In Sienkiewicz's novel Levin focuses on the difference between the old and the new, between rural life and technological progress. The old pastoral life is a boon, a refuge; the new world, the modern technology, the crowd, filth and noise are seen as "hell-on-earth" (182). Whereas Sienkiewicz's novel establishes its characters' fixity in memory, Kafka's protagonist breaks with the past, and thanks to his ability to respond to the sensory overloads of the city he is successful in his transition from one culture to another. As pointed out by Levin, read Sienkiewicz's *After Bread* and Kafka's *Amerika*, Conrad's story emerges as "a cultivated and philosophical study of the clashing of two complementary discourses on the evolution of the human subject" (191). Levin focuses on the cultural and technological shock Yanko Goorall experienced. She draws attention to the tension between past and present, between memory and perception.

Laurence Davis's last essay in section three, "Four Exiles in Three Volumes: W. G. Sebald, Ewa Kuryluk, Juan Gabriel Vásquez and Joseph Conrad," is a study of Conrad as a vivid presence in W. G. Sebald's *The Rings of Saturn*, Ewa Kuryluk's *Centure 21*, and Juan Gabriel Vásquez's *The Secret History of Costaguana*. Davies claims that these authors invoke Conrad's legacy in transnational texts sounding out the life and works their transnational predecessor. All stories reflect their authors' experiences of migration, whether by "volition or force of circumstance" (197). They tell stories of dispossession, distance, difference, dislocation, loss, but also curiosity, hunger for the new, joy at escaping from the old. All the three authors feel affinity with Conrad, they read him in fresh ways and set him in new frames.

The volume closes with Chris GoGwilt's "Afterword." Arguing that all the essays in this volume call attention to problems of race and racism shaping the experiences of migration and transnationalism throughout Conrad's life and work, and while affirming the particularity of migrant crossings each essay seeks to make visible, it is important, too, to note that none of these essays considers the way Conrad's fiction documents the migrant labour or the transnational significance of Black lives. GoGwilt considers the role of James Wait in *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*, whose "Blackness is precisely the fact around which the migration and transnationalism of all the other characters and figures revolve" (218). James Wait, who epitomizes the transnational experience of migrant labour in the British merchant marine, provides a striking example of the way Black lives do and do not matter for Conrad.

All in all, the study of migration, modernity and transnationalism in Conradian narratives is another exciting contribution to Conrad studies, providing a powerful insight into the writer's biographical and fictional world which carries an understanding of the intersections and boundaries that mark the personal experience from the public rendering, by scholars from Europe and the United States. It allows the reader to separate Conrad's life from his art, but at the same time the reader gets a glimpse into the transactions that take place between his personal life and his fiction. While the book is clearly most suited for those interested in Conrad, the ideas presented here may also inspire scholars who do not specialize in this specific historical or literary field.